

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /092 W

-----028556 080808Z /13/10

P R 071300Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 189

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 284

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (FROM DJIBOUTI VICE SANA)

E.O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PDIP, PBOR, PINS, DJ, ET, SO

SUBJECT: MOUNTING TENSIONS IN DJIBOUTI-ETHIOPIAN REALTIONS

REF: DJIBOUTI 285

1. POST VIEWS WITH GROWING CONCERN INCREASING FRICTIONS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN DJIBOUTI AND ADDIS ABABA. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, ONE OF THE KEYSTONES OF DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE IS THE MAINTENANCE OF AT LEAST A SUPERFICIAL NEUTRALITY IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS TWO BELLICOSE NEIGHBORS. EVENTS DEMONSTRATE THAT THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT IS EITHER UNWILLING OR
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UNABLE TO PRESERVE THE SEMBLANCE OF EVENHANDEDNESS NECESSARY TO PLACATE BOTH PARTIES.

2. ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE FITIGU TASSE WAS RECALLED TO ADDIS ABABA ON 3 AUGUST TO EXPLAIN TO THE EPMG WHY RELATIONS WITH DJIBOUTI ARE NOT PROGRESSING BETTER, AND SPECIFICALLY WHY THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET

ACCEPTED HIS CREDENTIALS. CHARGE SPOKE WITH FITIGU ON THE EVE OF HIS RETURN TO ADDIS AND WAS TOLD THAT EPMG PATIENCE WITH DJIBOUTI IRRITANTS WAS DRAWING VERY SHORT. FITIGU, WHO IS NORMALLY A CALM AND INTELLIGENT COLLEAGUE WITH A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR, WAS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT BEING RECALLED TO ADDIS. HE EXPECTS TO RETURN TO DJIBOUTI WITHIN A WEEK.

3. ONE OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE DJIBOUTIENS IS AN INCURSION INTO DJIBOUTI TERRITORY OF A NUMBER OF ETHIOPIAN SOLDIERS ON JULY 21. REPORTEDLY, THE ETHIOPIANS STOLE SOME 400 SHEEP AND GOATS AS WELL AS TWO OR THREE CAMELS. THE INCIDENT COULD NOT HAVE OCCURED AT A WORST MOMENT, BECAUSE FITIGU WAS SUPPOSED TO PRESENT HIS CREDENTIALS TMS FOLLOWING DAY. THE APOINTMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT WAS XANCELLED (THE FRENCH, EGYPTIAN AND SOMALI AMBASSADORS DID PRESENT THEIR CREDENTIALS ON 22 JULY) AND A VERY STRONG PROTEST WAS SENT TO ADDIS ABABA. ACCORDING TO FITIGU, THE ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN MINISTRRY IMMEDIATELY AGREED TO PAY COMPENSATION. NEVERTHELESS, THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT IS NOT WILLING TO PUT THE MATTER ASIDE AND EVIDENTLY CONTINUES TO DISCUSS THE CONDITIONS FOR COMPENSATION AND OTHER DETAILS WHICH ARE VIEWED BY THE ETHIOPIANS AS SIMPLY PRETEXTS FOR NOT RECECVYNG FITIGU'S CREDENTIALS.

4. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL PRESENTS A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT ANALYSIS OF THE SHEEP AND GOAT INCIDENT, STATING
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THAT THE REAL REASON FOR THE DJIBOUTIEN RELUCTANCE IS THEIR DISLIKE TO FITIGU AND HIS LOCAL "SUBVERSIVE" ACTIVITIES. ACCORDING TO BASTOUIL, THE EPMG NEVER ASKED FOR FORMAL AGREEMENT FOR FITIGU, ASSUMING THAT AS LONG-TIME ETHIOPIAN CONSUL GENERAL IN DJIBOUTI (2 1/2 YEARS), THERE WAS NO NEED TO DO SO. BASTOUIL IS AWARE OF THE COMPLEX ISSUE PRESENTED BY THE LACK OF ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADORIAL REPRESENTATION, BUT HE PERSONALLY IS PUT OUT AT FITIGU BECAUSE THE ETHIOPIAN EVIDENTLY TOLD HIS GOVERNMENT THAT THE FRENCH WERE THE TRUE CULPRITS IN THE AFFAIR.

5. IF THE EPMG WISHES TO DEMONSTRATE SOME MUSCLE FOR ITS TROUBLESOME LITTLE NEIGHBOR, THERE EXISTS A READY-MADE OPPORTKUNITY. ACCORDING TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL, A GROUP OF ABOUT 75 F.L.C.S. MILITANTS FROM DJIBOUTI CROSSED INTO ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY IN EARLY JULY AND ACCUPIED AN ABANDONED ETHIOPIAN POLICE POST ON THE RAILWAY LINE JUST WEST OF DUENELE. THERE THEY RAISED THE F.L.C.S. FLAG, WHICH SERVED AS A MODEL FOR THE DJIBOUTI NATIONAL FLAG, AND THEREFORE COULD BE TAKEN AS A DJIBOUTI FLAG. AN ADDITIONAL GROUP OF 200 PLUS F.L.C.S. MEMBERS FROM SOMALIA SUBSEQUENTLY CROSSED THROUGH DJIBOUTI TERRITORY TO REINFORCE THEIR COMRADES.

ALTHOUGH THE FRENCH HAVE REPEATEDLY WARNED THE DJIBOUTI
GOVERNMENT IN OPPOSITION TO F.L.C.S. ACTIONS.

6. GIVEN THE VOLCANIC SITUATION IN THE HORN, IT IS CLEAR
THAT THE DILEMMA PRESENTED BY ITS ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS
PRESENTS CONSIDERABLE DANGER TO DJIBOUTI. IF DJIBOUTI
CONTINUES TO DRIFT INTO THE SOMALI ORBIT, THERE WILL BE IN-
CREASED PRRESSURE WITH THE EPMG TO "PROTECT DJIBOUTI'S
INDEPENDENCE." EVEN IF THE MATTER DOES NOT COME TO A
HEAD IN THE FORM OF A FRONTAL ATTACK, THERE ARE OTHER WAYS
OF BRINGING PRESSURE. AS CHARGE FITIGU HAS STATED TO ME
ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THE ETHIOPIAN POSSESS CONSIDERABLE
ABILITY TO "DESTABILIZE" THE SITUATION IN DJIBOUTI.

CLARKE

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